


Benefit Statement Enclosed

Your annual benefit statement is enclosed with this edition of the **Informers**. Beginning this year, your statement will only show the last four numbers of your Social Security number to help protect you from identity theft, which has become one of the most frequent and costly crimes in the U.S.

Review your statement carefully, since it contains information on group health, life insurance and beneficiaries. **Please pay special attention to the life insurance beneficiary designation section.** The Minnesota Life Insurance Company maintains the life beneficiary information and has provided SERS with the beneficiary(ies) you have on file with their office.

Refer to your statement during the annual Benefit Choice insurance enrollment period in May. The statement also contains an annuitant identification card. Cut out the I.D. card and carry it with you as proof of your association with the state of Illinois for government and retiree discounts on airfare, hotels, restaurants, etc.



After a year of planning and preparation, we recently put our new website out on the Internet (www.state.il.us/srs). The new site complies with CMS guidelines for the State's web accessibility standards, while also having many new features allowing easier access to SERS information in a friendly layout. We plan to add more features to our website in the near future. If you have questions or concerns about our website, feel free to contact our web-master at dbain@srs.state.il.us.

Grandparents Today

Today's grandparents are teachers, family historians and advisers. They are also pals, active and generous. Best of all, they are overwhelmingly happy to be grandparents!

AARP commissioned an independent study to find out how grandparents interact with their grandchildren. The study offers a detailed and informative portrait of today's grandparents.

Grandparents are very satisfied with their relationship with their grandchildren. Eighty-one percent of those surveyed gave their relationship an eight or higher on a scale of one to ten.

Goals & Values

The most common role grandparents prefer to play in the life of a grandchild

is that of companion or friend. But grandparents also want to be advisers, family historians, storytellers, and confidants.

To find out how grandparents pursue their goals the AARP survey asked respondents about 17 activities they may have done with a grandchild over the last month. Today's grandparents are more likely to be outside playing with a grandchild than inside nodding off while reading them a book.

Grandparents, being human, want to pass on their values to their grandkids. To identify these values, the survey posed an open-ended question: "What do you think is the most important value or legacy you would like to pass on to a grandchild?"

Their preference in order: morality and integrity, success and ambition, religion, being considerate of others, and being a trustworthy, responsible person.

Generosity & Money

When it comes to money and gifts, grandparents are nothing if not generous. Seven in ten bought a gift for a grandchild within the past month. The subset of grandparents most likely to spoil their grandkids are young grandmothers age 50-59.

The gender split narrows among grandparents age 60-74, but grandmothers (74%) remain more likely than grandfathers (68%) to have bought a present in the last month.

In overall cash outlays on grandchildren, grandfathers dig deeper (\$562 per year) than grandmothers (\$453). The median amount spent by both genders is \$489 per year.

Federal Income Tax Withholding

Monthly benefits paid by SERS are subject to federal income tax withholding. If you have a request on file for federal income tax to be withheld, it will continue to be honored unless you request a change. To modify or end your withholding, you must notify SERS in writing.

If there is not a withholding election on file, taxes will be with-

held as if you are married claiming three exemptions. This married person with three exemptions would have no withholding taken on a benefit of less than \$1,440 per month, unless it is requested.

You may have to pay taxes and penalties at the end of the year if your estimated tax payment(s) are not adequate.

Important SERS Telephone Numbers

Income Tax Withholding, 1099-R, Address Change:
217-785-7034

Insurance: 217-785-7150

Retirement: 217-785-7322

Death/Survivor Benefits:
217-785-7366

Chicago Office: 312-814-5853

Circle the 2004 MRR Workshop That You Would Like to Attend.

The 2004 Myths and Realities of Retirement workshop for retirees, survivors, disability benefit recipients and their guests are filling up quickly. The list at right are the only workshops still available.

This free, one-day workshop examines financial scams, the effects of inflation, estate planning, group insurance benefits, and health & leisure.

If you would like to attend an MRR workshop, complete this application and return it to us. After you register, we will confirm your enrollment by letting you know the exact workshop location.

Apr. 29	Moline (46)
Jun. 17	Rend Lake (21)
Jun. 30	Normal (33)
Jul. 15	Carbondale (06)
Jul. 22	Peoria (12)
Aug. 19	Galesburg (23)
Aug. 26	Rockford (90)
Sep. 9	Effingham (67)
Sep. 21	Macomb (29)
Sep. 30	Rockford (90)
Oct. 12	Taylorville (24)
Oct. 21	Rend Lake (21)
Nov. 16	Peoria (13)
Dec. 14	Joliet (47)

Name _____

Social Security Number _____

Are You Bringing a Guest? _____

Return This Form To:

State Retirement Systems, Field Services Division
2101 S. Veterans Parkway
P. O. Box 19255
Springfield, IL 62794-9255
217-785-6979

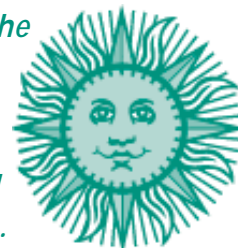
SERS FACTOID

SERS paid out 42,405 retirement annuities worth a total of \$733.9 million in 2003, up from 28,129 annuities worth \$268.7 million in 1994.

THINK SPRING!

The vernal equinox, better known as the first day of spring, arrives on March 20.

On this day the sun crosses directly over the equator on its annual voyage north. Equinox means "equal night," because the days and nights are about equal in length all over the world at this time of year. So smile-spring is finally here!



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